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An Address by

MAGGIE BLAUVELT CARR

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Public School Eighty-nine
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FORTY-TWO years before the three kings of the Orient, led by a star, made their journey to a manger in Bethlehem, Publius Syrus wrote these words: "I have often regretted my speech, but never my silence," and now one thousand nine hundred and nine years since that event in Bethlehem of Judea, which has been of so much interest to all students of history, whatever their creed, I stand here almost regretting my speech before it is made, for perhaps it would be better for me — a woman—to keep silent on this great occasion. When I received the invitation from your principal to speak here to-day, my first impulse was to say no. Then I commenced to think, and I remembered that on *this* twelfth day of February the flags would be thrown to the breezes all over our land; that in the morning the schoolhouses would be open, and that the children would assemble for special exercises; that in the evening magnificent banquets would be spread and that men would tell

in eloquent language of the life of a man who was born one hundred years ago to-day.

Then I remembered that one of the most widely-read histories of that man's life was written by a woman, Ida M. Tarbell. Then I remembered that at Gettysburg Abraham Lincoln made his most famous address, which was received by his audience in silence, but which has been handed down to us as a classic. I remembered that to-day on that famous battle field stands a monument to a woman, the only woman killed during the battle of Gettysburg—those three days of dreadful warfare which ended in victory for the North—remembered by the South as the time when the "flower of Virginia fell."

This woman's name was Jennie Wade. She was eighteen years of age. She was engaged to be married to a Union soldier. She was busy in her home baking bread for the soldiers on the battlefield when a shell crashed through the house and killed her instantly. To her memory there has been erected the statue of a veiled woman. It stands just outside the National Cemetery overlooking a closely-clipped hedge.

As a mother guards her children in their sleep, so she seems to be guarding these unknown sleepers in their last resting place.

And so with these thoughts, and remembering what women have done and are doing for the advancement of patriotism in our country, I have come here to take my part in this great celebration.

For many years I have held membership in a patriotic society founded on ancestry, and I regret that the object of that society is sometimes misunderstood. We who are eligible join it because we believe that the deeds of our ancestors—the men who founded and freed this our home land—deserve to be remembered by their descendants forever, and in this manner we are trying to do our part.

When these men — our great, great grandfathers—had worked with ax and shovel and hammer to establish their homes, they declared their attitude toward Great Britain with the pen. Then these men of 1776 shouldered the rifle and after seven years of hardship they threw off the British yoke and *they* gave us our country.

When you enter this society a blank is given the applicant to fill and one of the

first questions asks the age of the applicant. I have been told by the registrar of this society that in a period covering twenty years this question has been answered but twice. Once the age was eighteen, once it was eighty—a girl rejoicing in her youth, a woman feeling the honor of her years. But I know that between those birthdays a woman seldom mentions her age.

So, calmly facing the awful possibility of everyone here knowing just about how long I have been on earth, I want to tell you when I first heard the name of Abraham Lincoln. One beautiful spring morning, long years ago, on entering our dining-room for my breakfast, a most unusual sight met my childish eyes. No one was eating, no one was at the table, but seated near a window my father was reading from the morning paper, which was deeply lined with black. His own voice was broken as he read, and the others were weeping. And then it was explained to the youngest daughter of the household that a great and a good man had been called suddenly to meet his Maker. Then came the period of mourning, when the houses were draped

in black. Then there came the day when we children were taken to see that large procession pass through Fifth Avenue and the hearse that bore all that was mortal of the President of the United States, whose name will ever be linked with the Proclamation of Emancipation — the man who SAVED us our country.

Later we children learned in the schools, as you children are doing to-day, of this man's life and deeds. Now in the maturity of my years I think of him as I think of Moses, who led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. I think of him as I think of the angels who sang that night over Bethlehem: "Peace on earth, good will toward men," for I know that he led a nation out of bondage and brought peace to our land. By the liberation of a nation he bound a nation together and made it possible for it to stand before the other nations of the world honored and respected because of his act of humanity, civilization and decency. And I know that his act made it possible for brains and talent to be recognized, no matter what the color of a man's skin. I know that his act made it possible for a Negro girl to graduate from

a university in Atlanta, Ga., and twenty-three years ago to begin teaching a few children of her own race. By earnest work she now stands at the head of a school in Augusta, Ga., accomodating more than seven hundred children and employing twenty-two teachers. I refer to Miss Lucy C. Laney. I know that *his* act made it possible for a man—Paul Lawrence Dunbar, born of slave parents—to leave to this world, when he passed out of it a few years ago, his beautiful poems, which to-day stand on my book-shelves with those of Longfellow and Tennyson. I know that by the act of Abraham Lincoln, it was possible for Mr. Henry O. Tanner to cultivate his wonderful talent; to exhibit his magnificent paintings of Scriptural subjects in all of the large cities of Europe and America, and to be credited by foreign critics with standing third among the many artists of the United States. I know Abraham Lincoln made it possible for a man who was himself born a slave to found and conduct a college and to graduate from it each year young men so well equipped in the arts, professions and trades that they may lead useful and

worthy lives and stand shoulder to shoulder with their white brothers. And to those of you who listen to me to-day and are of his race, I bring a message as I heard it from the lips of Mr. Booker T. Washington, a few weeks ago, when he said: "To those of my race who desire advancement for themselves and their children I implore that they never undertake it with violence, but with honesty, industry and earnestness, aided by the midnight prayer."

And now I urge upon you all to be faithful in every undertaking and always to remember the dearly bought, priceless gift of liberty. I urge you to remember all that has been done for a nation and a race by a man whose heart was tender and sympathetic toward the least of men. All that we can do to-day on this the one hundredth anniversary of his birth—from the poorest to the most eloquent speaker—is to bring from a garland of thought a tribute of words to lay on an altar of love in memory of that great and good man, Abraham Lincoln.

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